

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL
WEATHER INFORMATION SYS-
TEMS ACT IMPROVEMENTS

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, last year I introduced legislation H.R. 1016, which would amend the National Agriculture Weather Information Systems Act of 1990 to improve the collection and distribution of weather information to assist agricultural producers. Today, I am again introducing this bill, and I urge all Members to cosponsor this important legislation.

The 1990 farm bill established the National Agricultural Weather Information System under the U.S. Department of Agriculture to meet the weather and climate information needs of agricultural producers. I believe that the program is vital because it collects and organizes weather information from universities, State programs, Federal agencies and the private weather consulting sector. Moreover, it provides funding for weather research programs.

However, it provides for the establishment of only 10 State agricultural weather information systems that are responsible for disseminating information to agricultural producers in those States. That leaves a large portion of this Nation's agricultural producers without any assistance.

Mr. Speaker, my legislation fills the gaps left by present law by requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into an agreement with the Secretary of Commerce to use Weather Service offices and Weather Service forecast offices to collect, organize, and distribute information aimed at meeting the short-term and long-term weather and climate information needs of agricultural producers. Each field office of the National Weather Service will be responsible for collecting and organizing information that will impact the region that it covers.

H.R. 1016 will provide agricultural producers throughout the Nation with comprehensive and timely information. Weather information is central to agricultural producers across the Nation because variations in weather conditions can cause huge losses in production. My legislation will reduce the risk of profit loss.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to cosponsor this important legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STATE
MARITIME ACADEMY LICENSING
RELIEF ACT

HON. JACK FIELDS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. FIELDS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today a bill to provide relief to the young men and women who attend our State maritime academies: Texas A&M University at Galveston, the California Maritime Academy, the Great Lakes Regional Maritime Academy, the Maine Maritime Academy, the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and the New York Maritime Academy.

These academies educate and train licensed officers for service during war and

peace in the maritime industry, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Unlike students enrolled at the national service academies, cadets at our six State maritime academies pay their own tuition and fees for their education, including training cruises and naval science courses. In addition, their academic year lasts 11 months, which deprives them of the opportunity for summer employment. In order to get a maritime job, graduates have to take and pass examinations for a license as an engine or deck officer.

Regrettably, in 1990, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act—Public Law 101-508—removed longstanding prohibitions against the collection of fees or charges for these examinations and licenses. While I oppose any fee or charge for the issuance of a maritime license, I am particularly distressed that there are no exemptions from these fees, and that they even apply to cadets graduating from our State maritime academies. In response to that act, the Coast Guard has imposed a number of new fees requiring these fine young men and women to pay up to \$500 to obtain their licenses and merchant mariner documents.

Mr. Speaker, State maritime academy cadets, who normally take a licensing examination within 3 months of graduation, do not have the financial resources to pay these fees. They have just completed 4 years of college, have spent thousands of dollars on college expenses, and have yet to earn a penny in their chosen profession. The fees place a heavy burden on cadets at a time when they can least afford it. These fees are a disincentive to those contemplating a career in the U.S. maritime industry and they are patently unfair, in that other transportation professionals, like airline pilots and railroad engineers, are not required to pay licensing or examination fees.

These fees will do little to reduce our Federal deficit; they will cause tremendous pain for our State maritime academy graduates; and they will further strain the U.S. merchant marine industry, which is struggling for its survival.

Superintendents at the State academies strongly recommend that the user fees for licenses be repealed for all cadets taking an entry level examination. These superintendents have previously testified during congressional hearings that "it is unconscionable to mandate to young men and women who pay for an education which clearly supports our national security to take and pass a licensing exam, and then charge them a fee to take it. In essence, the user fee is a graduation tax which is exorbitant in relation to an entry level cadet's income history."

While my preference would be to either repeal these onerous fees or waive them for first-time recipients, unfortunately, the Congressional Budget Office has indicated that either approach would create a pay-as-you-go [PAYGO] budget problem. Since I am not interested in increasing anyone's tax burden, I have decided to solve this problem in a different way.

Under my bill, our six State maritime academies would each receive a portion of a \$300,000 authorization to pay any Coast Guard user fees associated with the cost of a cadet obtaining an original license and merchant mariner document. Furthermore, this reimbursement system would only be activated when Congress appropriates the additional

money required to satisfy this purpose. Until that occurs, State maritime cadets will have to pay their own fees. In this way, Congress can ease the financial burden on these maritime cadets without forcing their academies to reduce funding for vital training or educational programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of the State Maritime Academy Licensing Relief Act.

JOB TRAINING

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, January 4, 1995 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

JOB TRAINING

An important challenge for the nation is to equip American workers with the skills and training necessary to find jobs in today's labor force. In talking with employers in Indiana, I am constantly impressed with the mismatch between the skills Hoosiers have and the skills managers require. Many workers have skills, but not the right skills that high technology companies require to compete globally. The problem is how you move a work force suited to one type of economy into a world that demands different skills.

PRIVATE SECTOR TRAINING

The private sector has taken the lead on training and retraining the work force. Such efforts vary from firm to firm, but tend to predominate in larger companies. Corporate restructuring has reassigned responsibility from upper management to workers and supervisors, increasing the need for management and team-based skills at these levels. Companies have recognized that survival in the global marketplace requires a flexible work force with diverse skills and adaptability to new work routines and environments. On average, employers spend about 2% of their payroll on training.

The skills that are needed in the workplace are fairly well agreed upon. Workers need the ability to develop work schedules, budget money and assign staff. They require interpersonal skills. They need to know how to use computers to gather and process information. They must understand how their own work fits into the work around them so that they can solve problems. They also need to deal with new technologies in an everchanging workplace.

None of these skills replaces the needed proficiency in the basics: reading, writing and arithmetic. Without those basic skills, the other skills would be of little value. The important thing is that the education system produce learners, not knowers. Workers need to demonstrate a mastery of skills more than the accumulation of a body of knowledge.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

The federal government runs a number of training programs to help complement private sector efforts, but many of those programs have had a mixed record of success. The federal government spent about \$25 billion last year on more than 150 employment and training programs administered by 14 agencies. Many of these programs are small and receive limited funding, and most are managed in cooperation with state governments. In Indiana, for example, the Indiana

Department of Workplace Development runs many retraining programs through local private industry councils.

Federal education and training programs concentrate on two types of persons. Disadvantaged workers lack the basic skills to function in the labor force or to acquire education and training. Programs for these persons concentrate on providing skills and education that will enable them to participate in the work force and become self-sufficient. Some programs provide remedial training; others, adult literacy and vocational training.

Dislocated workers have the skills to participate in the work force, but have become temporarily unemployed. These workers may require retraining to find new jobs. Workers who become dislocated through federal policies, such as trade agreements, environmental regulation or defense downsizing are eligible for federally funded job training.

REFORMS

Congress has already taken some steps to improve the current system. It has funded local "one stop" career centers where workers can obtain information on training programs and employment opportunities. It has also created School-to-Work transition programs that will assist young persons in making the transition from school to full-time employment.

However, more dramatic reforms are likely to be considered this year. We need to consolidate our present array of federal job training programs in a manner that enhances worker participation and productivity. These programs should be structured to make information and resources more available to the intended recipients. One approach would be to consolidate existing programs into a single federal program and give state governments more flexibility in administering retraining efforts. A second approach involves providing "skill scholarships", student loans, and tax credits to those who are in need of training and education. Financial resources would be placed directly in the hands of those who seek to improve their skills.

CONCLUSION

Most studies show that the benefits of federal retraining efforts are modest, especially in the programs for severely disadvantaged workers. It has become very clear that you cannot make up for the deficits of a lifetime in a few months of training. We may get better results from programs with one or two years of intense training.

I am inclined to think that the main focus of our efforts should be on mainstream young people who are not going on to four year college. The approach would direct such youth into community colleges and technical programs to upgrade their basic skills and to learn other skills needed in growing areas. Our country does a lot for people who go to college. We do considerably less for people who do not. They are the forgotten half. They are also largely the people who build homes, fix appliances, repair roads, answer telephones and work in factories.

Of course, the great flaw in the training programs is simple: many trainees cannot find jobs. One approach to alleviate this program may be for government to provide training funds to employers who have jobs but cannot find suitable workers. This approach sidesteps expensive and fruitless job searches. Employers, under this approach, would guarantee jobs to those who complete training successfully.

The nation's challenge is to create a system of worker training that will train a highly skilled and educated work force, boost our nation's productivity, and meet the economic challenges from abroad. Our

society must adopt a philosophy of life-long learning and training for workers. Without well-trained workers, this country will become a second-rate economy.

INTRODUCTION OF THE EQUAL REMEDIES ACT

HON. BARBARA B. KENNELLY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to correct a serious inequity in civil rights legislation, created by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. While that bill represented significant progress in the ongoing battle to overcome discrimination, it also created a two-tiered system of justice.

Under the current law, victims of intentional racial discrimination are entitled to unlimited damages. However, victims of discrimination based on disability, sex or religion can receive damages only up to a statutory maximum. Just as I strongly support the right to seek unlimited damages for racial discrimination, I also support this redress for victims of other types of discrimination as well.

That is why I am introducing the Equal Remedies Act of 1995. This bill would eliminate caps on damages set by the Civil Rights Act of 1991 and send the strong message that discrimination of any kind cannot be tolerated by our society. It is time to make all victims of discrimination equal under the law—second-class remedies have no place in anti-discrimination law.

I urge all my colleagues to support this important legislation.

CAPITAL GAINS—CREATING JOBS AND TREASURY REVENUE

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 4, 1995

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, when I first ran for Congress in a 1969 special election, the overriding theme of my candidacy at that time and the theme of my candidacy ever since, centered on fiscal responsibility—less spending and lower taxes. Although I was not initially able to serve on a committee directly dealing with tax or budget issues, in the 94th Congress, 1975–1976, I was honored with an appointment to the Committee on Ways and Means, the committee with jurisdiction over all tax matters that came before Congress. I have served on that committee ever since.

In the years prior to my service in Congress, it had become clear to me that lower taxes stimulate economic growth, and this was certainly the case with regard to the taxation of capital gains. From the day I began serving in Congress I have pushed to reduce the rate of tax on capital. In the time I have served on the committee, we have reduced the capital gains rate twice, only to see the rate hiked back up through the enactment of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. In 1989, we came close to again bringing the rate back down, actually passing a reduction in the House, only to see the legislation die in the Senate. Now, with a new

Republican majority in Congress and the Republican Contract With America, we have another opportunity to reduce the capital gains rate.

Over the years I have sponsored, cosponsored, and supported many different capital gains proposals. Indeed, I am an original cosponsor of the contract's capital gains proposal offered by my long-time colleague and good friend, the new chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, BILL ARCHER. In addition, to cosponsoring Chairman ARCHER's legislation, however, I wanted to again introduce my own legislation to this Congress, not only to highlight my long-standing commitment to this issue, but to raise the matter of the appropriate rate of taxation for capital gains.

In the next months, the Ways and Means Committee will be holding a series of hearings that will include debate and discussion of a capital gains rate reduction. We will discuss indexation of capital gains—something I believe is absolutely critical—the period of time which capital must be held to qualify, and we will discuss the rate at which capital gains ought to be taxed.

Frankly, I would love to see capital gains taxes eliminated altogether. Moreover, I believe any reduction in the rate will be beneficial to all Americans. However, if your intention is to greatly stimulate capital investment while at the same time maximize revenues to the Treasury, experts suggest that the capital gains rate should be set somewhat between 12–15 percent. The legislation I am introducing today would provide for a maximum capital gains rate of 15 percent for all brackets except for those in the lowest bracket, where the rate would be 7.5 percent.

I would be remiss in closing this statement without making some additional comments with regard to the benefits of reducing the capital gains rate. First, all Americans will benefit from a reduction in capital gains tax, not just the rich. It is flat out wrong to state that only rich people will benefit from such a tax cut. Indeed, the last time we seriously debated the issue in 1989, Treasury Department statistics showed that almost 75 percent of those families/individuals filing tax returns which reported capital gains had incomes of less than \$50,000, hardly the rich.

Moreover, when the capital gains rate is reduced, not only does money flow more freely between capital investments but more money is invested in capital. Both of these consequences are highly beneficial, and the net result of more investment is more jobs. The small businessman who is taking a risk starting a new business will find it easier to attract investors to share that risk because the penalty for success has been reduced. Moreover, because a larger pool of money will become available for capital investment due to a reduced capital gains tax rate, the cost of that capital to businesses will go down.

Another point that must be mentioned concerns how the change in the capital gains rate affects revenues to the Treasury—not a small issue in our dire budgetary circumstances. Critics of capital gains rate reductions have always tried to suggest that a reduction in the capital gains rate will mean a reduction in revenue to the Treasury. Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, the past two times we have reduced the capital gains rate, revenues to the Treasury attributed to capital gains have actually increased. This happens because of